

**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Division of Family Services
Permanency Unit**

**Announces an Application for Funding for
Recruitment of African American Families
For Adoption of Children in Foster Care**

RFA Grant Number – GFSA-0602

Deadline: May 31, 2005, 5:00 p.m.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose and intent of this Request for Application (RFA), Grant Number GFSA-0602 is to enter into a contract with one or more agencies and organizations to conduct statewide recruitment, orientation and support of prospective adoptive families from within African American faith, civic and social communities.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are local department of social services in Virginia, licensed child-placing agencies with offices in Virginia, and non-profit agencies and organizations that have the skills and experience to provide these critical services.

Responsibilities of Selected Sub-grantees

- Agree to the terms set forth in the Request for Application (an affirmative statement in a cover letter ensuring compliance with the Special Terms and Conditions and the General Terms and Conditions will suffice for those sections).
- Attend meetings with the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) as required by the VDSS.

Funding Available and Grant Period

A total of \$183,209 is available. Sub-grants are funded on a competitive basis and only the applications demonstrating a multifaceted approach best practice model will be funded. Sub-grants may be awarded to only one applicant or to multiple applicants. A minimum of 25% cash or in-kind match is required. No other federal funds may be used as part of this match. Applicants must not use local, state, or other federal funds already being used for other matching purposes. The application must provide sufficient certification in the application that the matching funds are eligible and consistent with the guidelines given. The funding period for sub-grants for the first year will be July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006. The sub-grant may be renewed for two full subsequent funding years through June 30, 2008.

How to Apply

Applicants requesting funding must submit one original and five (5) copies of the Recruitment of African American Families for Adoption Application, Grant Number GFSA-0602 **no later than 5:00pm on May 31, 2005**. The applications should be addressed to Pamela Fitzgerald Cooper, Virginia Department of Social Services, Division of Family Services, Permanency Unit, 7 North Eighth Street, Richmond, Virginia, 23219-3301. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered. **Emailed or faxed applications will not be considered.**

Additional Information

Copies of this sub-grant application, including the necessary sub-grant application forms and instructions, may be downloaded from the DSS website www.dss.state.va.us . Sub-grant award notices will also be posted on this website.

If you have additional questions regarding the sub-grant application material or process, please contact:

Pamela F. Cooper
Pamela.cooper@dss.virginia.gov
804-726-7575
7 Eighth N. Street
Richmond, VA 23219

II. PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS

Program Overview

The purpose of this Recruitment of African American Families for Adoption Application, Grant Number GFSA-0602 is to provide statewide recruitment, orientation and support services for children in custody of local departments of social services in Virginia who need adoptive families. Recruitment includes all outreach, educational and supportive activities that an organization uses to interest and help an individual and/or family becomes an adoptive parent. It also includes all activities from outreach and/or first contact to support activities until placement of a child with an approved parent. This definition of recruitment is comprehensive because we are promoting a definition of recruitment that is results-based and inclusive of all person in the agency who have a hand in helping a prospective parent become an adoptive parent. The intended result of recruitment is the placement of a child in a prepared and committed adoptive home

Virginia's adoption program is faced with a number of challenges and opportunities. In 1997, Congress passed the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA). ASFA was passed in response to growing dissatisfaction with state child welfare systems in achieving the goals of safety, permanency, and well-being for children and families. Although the 1980 Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (P.L. 96-272) introduced the notion of permanency planning for children in foster care, the process to achieve permanency was a linear one. With the linear process, children often remained in foster care for long periods of time waiting for the birth family to remedy the conditions that lead to the child's removal.

ASFA significantly changed the 1980 Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (P.L. 96-272) benchmark legislation that emphasized securing permanent families for children. ASFA shortened the time required to reach permanency. Permanency hearings are now held at 12 months and petitions for termination of parental rights must be filed at the permanency planning hearing, unless there is a compelling reason not to terminate parental rights. For children who had been in foster care 17 or the most recent 24 months, ASFA required expedited termination of parental rights, unless compelling reasons existed. As a result of these changes, the number of children with the goal of adoption in Virginia's foster care system remains higher now than it was prior to the passage of ASFA.

ASFA further required that health care coverage be provided to all children with special needs, introduced new practice tools such as concurrent planning, and prohibited states from delaying or denying placements based on the geographical locations of the child and family. It is clear that collaborative strategies are necessary to achieve maximum implementation of ASFA and ensure that children achieve permanency in a timely manner.

In March 2000, the Department of Health and Human Services launched a new approach to monitoring state child welfare programs. The new approach, Child and Family Services Reviews, focuses on assessing each state's capacity to create and achieve

positive, measurable outcomes for children. The reviews include state adoption programs, and are based upon compliance with the requirements of ASFA. Each state was measured against national performance standards, one of which is the length of time for children with the goal of adoption to achieve that goal. The national standard Virginia is expected to meet is for 32 percent of children with the goal of adoption to achieve adoption within 24 months of removal. The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Self-Assessment from Fiscal Year 2000 data showed that 17 percent of Virginia foster children achieved adoption within 24 months. Clearly more work must be done for Virginia to meet the national standard.

Current Status: Much has improved since 1985 when VDSS held the first statewide recruitment campaign on behalf of African American children with special needs. For instance, 321 African American Churches have made a commitment to find from within their congregations at least one prospective adoptive family. Prior to the 1985 campaign, churches were not a part of VDSS recruitment for children in foster care. There is also a higher demand for African-American infants and children up to age three by families of African-American heritage. Some progress is seen in the willingness of families to accept younger sibling groups.

However, older children (aged 9 and older), males of African-American heritage, sibling groups that include older children, disabled children, children from families with backgrounds of mental illness and substance abuse and children with developmental delays continue to wait. These children continue to need additional resources and targeted recruitment efforts to increase their opportunities to find permanent homes. As of February 2005, there were 8,015 children in foster care. Of those children, 1,699 had the goal of adoption. Fifty four percent (54%) of these children are male and forty-six percent (46%) are females. The waiting children are 47.4 % African American, 44.4% White, .4% Asian, 6.7 % multi-raced and 1.1 races unknown. The ages of children with the goal of adoption vary, but are similar to the data for February 2005:

Age Groups	Number	Percentage
Under 1	28	1.6%
Age 1-thru 5	558	32.8%
Age 6-9	393	23.1%
Age 10-12	365	21.5%
Age 13-15	290	17.1%
Age 16-18	64	3.8%
Ages 19 & over	1	0.1%
Total Ages	1699	100.0%

As a result of ASFA, Virginia has seen an increase in the number of children waiting for adoptive homes. In fiscal year 1996, there were 1,309 children in foster care with the goal of adoption. The number of children with the goal of adoption peaked in 1999 at 1,887. As of February 2005, there were 1,699 children in foster care with the goal of adoption. Although the number of children with the goal of adoption is decreasing, the number is still high. Additionally, the number of children with terminated parental rights waiting for adoptive homes is higher than ever before.

In addition to the number of children still waiting for adoptive families, the caseloads in local departments of social services workers remain high. According to the Child Welfare League of America, a worker responsible for adoption services should carry no more than 12 cases at any one time. The average number of cases carried by local department workers is significantly higher than the recommended caseload for special needs adoption. Added to the high caseload is the fact that many local workers have responsibility for more than just adoption, prohibiting them from dedicating all of their time to providing adoption services for children and adoptive families.

Need: Local social service agencies continue to need additional resources to recruit adoptive families that reflect the race, ethnicity, and culture of children in their custody. A sufficient pool of families can decrease the amount of time children with parental rights terminated wait for families and ensure the most appropriate placements for waiting children.

The Multi-Ethnic Placement Act of 1994, the Inter-Ethnic Provision that amended it in 1996, and the Adoption and Safe Families Act have provisions that specifically relate to recruitment. States must provide for the diligent recruitment of potential adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children in the state for whom adoptive homes are needed.

Summary: This RFA is reflective of VDSS's efforts to make diligent efforts to recruit African American families for children in foster care waiting for adoption. Other initiatives of the VDSS focus on recruitment efforts for other children in the foster care system waiting for adoption. The RFA is also reflective of VDSS efforts to achieve adoption for children in the foster care system in a timely manner. VDSS is seeking applications that demonstrate a multifaceted approach best practice model for recruitment of African American families to adopt children in the foster care system waiting for adoption.

Program Requirements

The recruitment activities provided are to be a mixture of the following types of recruitment:

General Recruitment

This type of recruitment broadcasts the need for adoptive parents and builds public interest and awareness. It is useful for setting the stage for more targeted recruitment and drawing in a wide variety of families. Examples include: billboards, public service announcements, and print media advertising.

Targeted Recruitment

The organization knows the population of children it needs to serve and bases recruitment strategies and messages on their needs. It has a good understanding of the demographics,

including location, of the people who typically adopt these children. Examples of targeted recruitment include: neighborhood and faith based initiatives, posters and flyers at places where prospective adoptive families typically shop, invitations receptions to special events. Recruitment efforts are targeted to those people in the areas where they are most likely to respond.

Child Specific Recruitment

This type of recruitment is based on finding a family for a specific child through aggressive outreach efforts, including cross-jurisdictional efforts. Examples include: newspaper or television features of a specific child or sibling groups, e.g. Wednesday's Child and child specific posters and flyers.

Child Centered Recruitment

These methods are being utilized by some agencies for older children who wait for adoption. This practice starts with an assessment of the child, includes the child if he or she is old enough and aggressively searches for lost relatives (birth relatives, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) and/or other person who are important to the child.

Applications must utilize a multifaceted approach best practice model in addressing recruitment for children in custody of the local departments of social services. Within the broad program requirements stated above, sub-grant funds can be used for activities such as the following:

- Salaries and fringe benefits of adoption recruiters and appropriate share of the project manager's costs.
- Supplies, materials and meeting expenses necessary for the grant activities.
- Limited equipment includes one time purchase of equipment such as computers and cell phones.

Applicants must demonstrate their organization's mission and practice related to working with diverse cultures. Cultural competence in working with African American's must be clearly demonstrated, since this RFA is focused on recruitment of prospective African American families.

III. APPLICATION PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Local departments of social services, private child placing agencies licensed to do business in Virginia and non-profit organizations are eligible to apply for these funds. **IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED FOR SELECTION, APPLICANTS MUST SUBMIT THEIR PROPOSAL AND THE COMPLETE REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS.**

Applicants should be sensitive to the cultural, socio-economic and community influences which affect the development and functioning of families, as well as:

- Have knowledge of adoption as a life long process;
- Be familiar with the community they propose to serve;
- Have good relationships and networks in place with other agencies providing services to families in the community they propose to serve;
- Have established relationships and networks in place with community faith, civic and social organizations.
- Provide assurances that project staff or a staff representative from the agency will attend adoption conferences and other adoption events sponsored by the VDSS.

Proposals shall be signed by an authorized representative of the applicant. All information requested must be submitted. Failure to submit all information requested may result in the proposal being considered non-responsive and, therefore, rejected.

Proposals should be prepared concisely, providing a straight forward description of capabilities to satisfy the requirements of the RFA. Emphasis should be on completeness and clarity of content.

Proposals must be typewritten and double spaced on 8 1/2" by 11" paper. All pages must be sequentially numbered beginning with Objective and Need for Assistance as page number one. Each copy of the proposal should be firmly bound in a single volume. All documentation submitted with the proposal should be bound in that single volume.

Specific Requirements

Return the complete RFA, signed and filled out as required.

Procedures for Applying: The project proposal shall not exceed thirty (30) pages and must adhere to the format described.

THE COVER PAGE must include the following information: Title of the project, name and address of the agency, name and phone number of the contact person, licensing status (if appropriate). This page should contain a signed statement from the applicant's fiscal officer that the agency has sufficient funds to cover project expenses. Do not put additional information on this page. This page does not count as one of the 30 pages.

Proposal Abstract: Provide a one-page abstract of the proposal highlighting key elements regarding the model proposed, implementation plans, and organizational capability to manage this award. The summary description should accurately and concisely reflect the project proposed. It should describe the objectives of the project, the approaches to be used and the outcomes expected. The description should include a list of major products that will result from the proposed project such as materials, data collection instruments, training packages, or videos. This page does not count toward the 30 page limit.

Objectives and Need for Assistance:

Proposals must clearly identify the needs that are to be met. The need for assistance must be demonstrated and the principal and subordinate objectives of the project must be clearly stated. Any relevant data based on planning studies should be included. Identify results and benefits to be derived. Each of the principle and subordinate objectives must be accompanied by the expected outcome. Each of the principle and subordinate objectives must have performance measures that show how the outcomes will be achieved.

Approach:

- A. Clearly describe the multifaceted best practice model that will be used. Provide a detailed description of how each component of the project will be implemented.
- B. Describe fully the services that will be included in the process, and the methodology for providing services.
- C. Describe how the agency will incorporate current initiatives, including Adoptive Family Preservation Services, ADOPT and use of match retreats into the services provided through this contract.
- D. Describe any unusual features of the project such as design or technological innovations, reductions in cost or time, or extraordinary community involvement.

Organizational Capability and Structure

- A. Give a history of your agency focusing on important activities and accomplishments in adoption over the last 5 years.
- B. Describe the "track record" of your organization and any previous or current experience in the provision of services to African American families emphasizing particular strengths/experiences working with families of diverse cultures and socio-economic backgrounds and families of children with physical and mentally challenging conditions.
- C. Describe any accreditation or other similar standards that your agency meets.
- D. Describe the organization and function of the board of directors and or any other internal governing bodies which would have some responsibility for this project.
- E. Describe the current total operating budget of your agency and its major programs. Indicate all public and private sources of funding.

Agency Profile

- A. Provide a summary (for the three previous fiscal years) of the number of children with special needs that you placed for adoption including information about age, race, sex, disabling conditions, and name of agency holding custody, if you are a local department of social services or a licensed child placing agency.
- B. Identify how you plan to provide recruitment services statewide. Include two (2) letters of support from different communities in which you will be working for the project.
- C. Describe your agency's prior experience and involvement in the community/region where contract activities will take place.
- D. Describe the competency of key project staff. Indicate whether current staff will be used or whether new staff will be hired for the project. Provide assurances that project staff is culturally competent and adoption competent.

Budget

The agency must submit a budget detailing expenditures related to the delivery of the recruitment services proposed. Agencies may use existing staff, hire additional staff, or contract with a person(s) on an as needed basis to provide recruitment services under this award. Budget forms should include costs for travel, conferences, and meetings associated with rendering services under this RFA.

A match of 25% is required. The match may be cash or in kind. Matching funds pledged to this grant cannot be used as match for any other funding source. The form, Budget Summary – DSS Funds and Match Funds, must be used to show the source and type of your match funds. Include this with your other budget sheets.

When calculating the match, multiply the amount of the request by .25. Subtract the resulting amount from the amount of the total request to obtain the match amount.

A program requesting \$50,000 would be required to provide a cash or in-kind match in the amount of \$12,500 ($\$50,000 \times .25 = \$12,500$).

A budget narrative must be provided that describes how the categorical costs are derived. Discuss the necessity and reasonableness of the proposed costs.

Required Attachments - No page limit is specified for this section.

- 1. A statement or letter from the applicant's fiscal officer is required. This letter must certify that the agency has sufficient money to cover the project expenses as grant funds will be awarded on a cost reimbursable basis. The recipient agency must submit monthly expenditure statements to the VDSS for reimbursement.

2. If the applicant agency is a private non-profit agency, the following is required at the time the proposal is submitted:
 - A. A copy of the applicant's Certificate of Incorporation or Certificate of Authority from the State Corporation Commission, Commonwealth of Virginia;
 - B. A copy of IRS form (s) certifying that the applicant organization is exempted from federal income tax payment under Section 501 (c) (3) of the IRS code; and
 - C. The current fiscal year's operating budget and a statement of actual expenditures for the previous fiscal year (audited report), including a listing of the sources of funding for both budgets (i.e., Statement of Revenues and Expenditures).
3. A copy of the agency's confidentiality policy must be submitted by each applicant providing direct services.
4. Letter(s) of support and other materials may be submitted as an appendix. This should be limited to documentation necessary to support the application.
5. Assurances: An Assurances form is included in the forms section for the required assurances. The person who will serve as project administrator must sign this form.

IV. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

1. Contractors shall submit an invoice monthly to the Department of Social Services, Adoption Unit.
2. The selected sub-grantee must complete quarterly progress reports due on the following days after the end of each quarter:

Quarters		Due
1	July 1, 2005- September 30, 2005	October 15, 2005
2	October 1, 2005 – December 31, 2005	January 15, 2006
3	January 1, 2006 – March 31, 2006	April 15, 2006
4	April 1, 2005 – June 30, 2006	July 15, 2006

3. The contractor agrees to provide any additional reports that the VDSS may request by written notice to the Contractor.

V. EVALUATION CRITERIA: PROPOSALS WILL BE EVALUATED BY A REVIEW COMMITTEE USING THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA

A Review Committee consisting of adoption professionals and Department staff will review proposals. The committee will reach group consensus and submit recommendations for funding to the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services.

Objectives and Need for Assistance – 20 Points

- The Objectives and Need for Assistance are clearly documented.
- Relevant data is provided to support need.
- The principle objectives and subordinate objectives of the project are clearly stated.
- The principle objectives and subordinate objectives are related to the need.
- The principle objectives and subordinate objectives are reasonable to achieve.
- Each principle objective and subordinate objective is accompanied by the expected outcome.
- Each principle objective and subordinate objective outcome is accompanied by an outcome measure.
- The overall goal and anticipated outcomes significantly contribute to the achievement of adoption for children in foster care.
- The overall goal and anticipated outcomes significantly contribute to decreasing the length of time a child remains in foster care.

Approach - 50 Points

- A clear, detailed description is provided of how each project component will be implemented.
- The services are fully described.
- The methodology for provision of services is provided and based on best practice.
- Current initiatives in Virginia are integrated into the project.
- The project has unique and unusual features.
- Partnerships and collaboratives are clearly defined, and a letter of commitment from the partner agency is included.
- State of the art practices are incorporated in the approach to services.

Organizational Capability and Structure - 5 Points

- Applicant's history demonstrates important activities and accomplishments in adoption over the last 5 years.
- The Applicant's "track record" of services and experience with adoptive families demonstrates sufficient knowledge and competency to implement this project.
- The Applicant's agency/organization is well-governed, fiscally sound, and capable of administering this project.
- Agency described accreditation or standards met, if appropriate.
- The organization and function of the board of directors or any internal governing body which would have some responsibility for this project is described.

- The Applicant's current total operating budget and major programs are described, indicating all public and private funding sources.

Agency Profile –15 Points

- The Applicant has demonstrated capacity to develop effective working relationships with local agencies and diverse community groups (those that may be targets for recruitment of families such as churches).
- Geographic area to be served by project is identified, as well as the Applicant's prior experience and involvement in that geographic area.
- The Applicant has experience and involvement in the geographic locations in which services are to be provided.
- The Applicant has knowledge of adoption as a life-long process
- Composition of the project staff and qualifications of key staff are described, and positions descriptions and resumes are included.
- All project staff understand MEPA, and the provisions of ASFA.

Budget - 10 Points

- The budget is reasonable to meet the level of service described for each service component.
- The budget narrative is clear and reasonable.

D. APPLICATION FORMS

- SUB-GRANT APPLICATION COVER SHEET
- BUDGET SUMMARY – VDSS FUNDS AND MATCH FUNDS
- FEDERAL PROGRAM ASSURANCES
- GENERAL SUB-GRANT CONDITIONS AND ASSURANCES
- WORK PLAN
- W-9